

potential profits of grouping together such a wide array of performance activities from a region presently comprising twenty-six nations with an equally diverse range of social and cultural history and contemporary dynamics. What results from this meticulous survey of the terms of engagement is a multivalent geographical expanse and cultural territory that requires an attentive historiography accounting for the exigencies of varied indigenous world views, encounters with European imperialism and conquest, historical migrations (forced and otherwise) from Africa and elsewhere, nation-building projects, revolutionary politics, contemporary negotiations of race/ethnicity, class, gender, and other categories central to the particularities of experience addressed by the pieces included in the collection. Introducing such an extensive collection of traditions and contexts requires an understanding of the role of theatre and performance within the larger movements of history both as vehicles of conquest, as was the case with the theatres of conversion to which many indigenous populations were subjected, and as sites of resistance that range from strategic significations within the colonial paradigm itself to more overt protest theatre and performance. *Stages of Conflict* centres these tensions as its organizing principle and productively presents a view of Latin American theatre and performance unmatched in the field to date.

In *Contemporary Latina/o Theatre*, Jon Rossini meanwhile executes careful close readings. The analysis is critically focused on the formation and negotiation of ethnicity as a process-based intersectional identity for communities of Latin American descent in the United States whose 'shared' culture or location within the national imaginary is generally overdetermined by governmental, media, and political generalizations of Latinas/os as a coherent and often stereotyped amalgam. Positioning theatre as a space-making practice where playwrights, directors and actors 'wright' ethnicity, Rossini attends to the ways theatre-makers critique and correct (right) dominant scripts of *latinidad* and write alternatives to these representations that are less attached to expectations of homogeneity or political correctness.

Analysing works by Miguel Piñero, Luis Valdez, José Rivera, Cherrie Moraga and others, Rossini sets out to demonstrate the myriad of ways in which Latina/o playwrights invoke and question assumptions of community. Central to his analysis are not only rhetorical strategies of the written word, but the spectatorial relations assumed by theatrical practices that challenge passive readership. The study's strength lies precisely in its devoted attention to these dynamics, which range from Piñero's construction of the performance space as a frontier space where audiences become players, to Moraga's critical inclusiveness.

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***The Swastika and the Stage: German Theatre and Society 1933–1945.* By Gerwin Strobl.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 341. £19.99/\$36.99 Pb; £57/\$98 Hb.

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Writing about German theatre during the Nazi period inevitably raises political and ethical issues about the responsibility of artists and of art at large. Klaus Mann's famous *Mephisto*, with its barely disguised portrait of Gustaf Gründgens, set the tone

for many reflections on theatre during the Third Reich, which made clear judgements that contrasted the emigrants with those who stayed and played for the Nazis. Gerwin Strobl follows a different path: his highly informative and provocative study avoids well-known protagonists and cases. Instead, the author has relied on combing, with admirable aptitude and accuracy, the files of several ministries and agencies, such as the *Reichsdramaturgie*, reconstructing not only the discourses but also the administrative structures that governed Nazi theatre politics. This allows Strobl to gain a multifaceted and much more conflicting picture of the position of theatre in a totalitarian system.

His premise is to re-examine the public attitude towards theatre from the Weimar Republic onwards. Following some of the major protagonists of Nazi theatre politics, such as *Reichsdramaturg* Rainer Schlösser or Carl von Schirach, father of Baldur von Schirach, the head of the Hitler Youth, Strobl traces the roots of Nazi art politics back to the interwar period. Both of the latter represented, according to Strobl, a small but well-educated conservative elite that felt badly treated and deprived of former privileges. The much-celebrated modernism of the Weimar years, as he goes on to demonstrate, not only alienated large parts of traditional audiences, but its rigorous gesture also excluded the former elites from participating in the public cultural discourse. As a consequence, large portions of both the former protagonists and the audience welcomed the reactionary Nazi measures as a way of healing such perceived shortcomings. Strobl thus constructs a much richer historical context, putting Nazi theatre politics in a perspective going back to the *Kaiserreich*.

Furthermore, Strobl makes clear that the Nazi measures in this field were not at all unequivocal. On the contrary, different concepts of art were engaged in a battle over political influence and public subsidies: The *Thing* movement relied on the tradition of mass theatre as it had emerged since the late nineteenth century, based on the idea of a nationalist revolution; regular theatres, on the other hand, tried to tie in with the dominant tradition of German repertory theatre and catered for the bourgeois notion of *Bildung*. Over time it became evident that the Nazis had a strong political claim on theatre as a way to mobilize the people, yet lacked artistic substance to sustain their claims. As early as 1934, they started to make compromises on all levels in order to avoid lowering artistic standards: where the political influence was too obvious, the audience simply stayed away. Strobl's illuminating study thus charts the German attitude towards as well as within theatre. He effectively discusses the attempts to instrumentalize and indoctrinate, finding examples for compliance as well as for an unexpected reservoir of strategies of resistance, developed by theatres and audiences. While some details would have called for further elaboration, the study's merit is that it never claimed to answer all questions, but primarily to open up new perspectives.

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Messiahs of 1933: How American Yiddish Theatre Survived Adversity through Satire. By Joel Schechter. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008. Pp. 304. \$39.50 Hb.

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As a seasoned historian of politically subversive clowning and popular theatre, Schechter brings a unique perspective to Yiddish performance, filled as that story has been with